


City of Houston Municipal Art
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Geometric Mouse

PUBLIC ART COLLECTION IDENTIFICATION SUMMARY	
	Number: 0009
	Artist: Oldenburg, Claes Thure (1929 -)
	Title: Geometric Mouse X
	Date: 1971
	Type: Sculpture
	Medium: Paint on Cor-Ten Steel
	Dimensions: Sculpture: 20' x 15' x 12' Small discs: 14" diameter Steel thickness 3/4"
	Foundry/Fabricator: Lippincott, North Haven, CT
	Location/Environment: Houston Public Library Plaza (500 McKinney), Outdoors
Provenance: Donated to the City of Houston by Dominique and Jean de Menil	

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Geometric Mouse

Historical Background

Artist

Claes Oldenburg, born in Stockholm in 1929. Oldenburg, a trained artist, was actively involved in the Pop Art Movement in the 1960's. He created and was involved in a number of Happenings, spontaneous moments of art, during that period.

The mouse theme, more specifically, the head of the mouse, began to emerge in Oldenburg's work in 1965. The image was used as a mask with a design based on a profile of a movie projector (the reels being the ears and the nose as the lens), in the performance piece *Moveyhouse*. The image appeared the following year as the facade and plan of the Mouse Museum, a museum displaying Oldenburg's objects of popular culture.

The mouse became part of Oldenburg's personal mythology. It was used as a letterhead symbol for his first retrospective exhibition, in 1966, at The Moderna Museet in Stockholm, and for a banner logo advertising his exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, in New York in 1969. Oldenburg regards the geometric mouse as a symbol of analysis and intellect, "autobiographical but not necessarily a portrait...[I]n other words, the mouse is a state of mind".

Subject

The sculpture was originally painted orange and then red in 1984 (by CDI Art Services after consulting Oldenburg) which gave the sculpture an orange-red tone. The piece was first restored in 1992.

Physical Description

Geometric Mouse X is an abstract, geometric representation of a mouse that is composed of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick Cor-Ten steel that is welded and bolted together. After restoration, the sculpture was painted with bright OSHA red.

Geometric Mouse X was part of a series of five geometric mice in different sizes and colors. The Houston Geometric Mouse (scale X) is unique because it is the largest of the group with a fixed unitary form. Only the two teardrop chains, attached to the eyelid-windows, are moveable. Fabricated at Lippincott, the planer shapes, simple rectangular openings and even-textures surfaces recall the minimalist aesthetic of the 1960's. The piece was installed in 1975.

The construction consists of two large circular discs (ears) attached to a large square (face), which has two rectangular pieces cut out to represent eyes, and a curved. There are two smaller discs attached by chain. The mouse is attached at three points with $\frac{7}{8}$ " stainless steel bolts and $1\frac{3}{8}$ " stainless steel nuts. The two outer attachment points have one bolt each and the middle attachment (square) has three bolts.

The inscription on the piece reads:

GM-X 1971
Claes Oldenburg
C
Executed by
Lippincott
...ENO...

Restoration / Conservation

Geometric Mouse X received conservation treatment in March 1999.